

THE
PHILOSOPHER:
IN
THREE CONVERSATIONS.

[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

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Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.

LONDON,

Printed for T. BECKET, in the Strand,

MDCCLXXI.

THE

PHILOSOPHER:

IN

THREE CONVERSATIONS.



By J. H. BAXTER.

LONDON:

Printed by T. Baxter, in the Strand.

M.DCCCXXII.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
LORD MANSFIELD.

MY LORD,

FIELDING saith, that asking leave to dedicate, is asking, whether you pay for a dedication; and, that he believes it to be so understood, by both authors and patrons.

The fear of being considered as a petitioning scribbler, was my principal reason, for not desiring permission to address your Lordship.

DEDICATION.

Your imagination, like the other powers of your mind, is instantaneous in it's perceptions; and, a kind of pride in me, cherished in retirement, and unused to mortification, very soon takes an alarm. In the first moments of a personal attendance, our minds would have run over some of the disagreeable ideas of patron, and author. Indeed, the misapprehension might soon have been removed: but I had a reluctance to be considered, for a moment, in a most humiliating light; or to receive a glance of your lordship's eye, while you were in any doubt, whether you should look on me, as a gentleman; or frown at me, as a beggar.

In

DEDICATION.

In a time of public uneasiness—every man, who loves his country, endeavours to trace the causes of that uneasiness; and to think of some methods, which may be taken, in order to remove them. Periodical papers, of various kinds, abound in letters, essays, and dissertations; pretended to be for this purpose: and, now and then, a political disquisition, is swollen into a pamphlet. In most of these publications, it is very possible the design may be good: I cannot say, they appear to me, calculated to answer such a design. Perhaps the same may be said of what I, now, offer to the consideration of your Lordship, and of the public. They are the sentiments of a private man, who leads, rather, a retired life, tho'

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DEDICATION.

he mixes with his fellow subjects, in their several societies, as a spectator, and attends with anxiety to every event, that may affect the interest of his country. If I thought them unimportant, they should remain in my own breast. I shall conclude they are so, when you, my Lord, and the public have passed that opinion on them:—my vanity will give way to that final and mortifying decision.

Yet a consciousness, that they were designed for the good of my country, and did not arise from views of interest, or attachment to party, would console me, even in such a situation.—But, I must avoid saying too much of myself; or I shall defeat my purpose, of giving
your

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DEDICATION.

your Lordship, favourable sentiments of me, and obtaining your perusal, if not your countenance of the following publication.—You may be more ready to excuse any impropriety in my manner, when you know that this is my first dedication, and my first appearance in the literary world.

I address myself to you, my Lord, as the man, in England, who is thought to have the greatest influence in public affairs. The political talents of, almost, all the members of the present administration, are, generally, spoken of with ridicule and contempt; with what justice, I will not, now, pretend to say. When the consequences of error, and ill-design are to be avoided, your talents
are

DEDICATION.

are their resource; it is thought, that, in the political machine, every regular and salutary movement can arise, only from your impulse.—I must say, that this, for a great while, has been my own opinion. However, from your lordship's understanding; from your knowledge of our laws; and your situation, as privy counsellor and judge, it is certain, that your power of serving your country is inferior to that of no man.

I have taken every opportunity, I could have, of hearing you speak in parliament, or on the bench: I have read every publication that has been attributed to you: I know of no man, whose abilities are nearly equal to those

DEDICATION.

of your Lordship.—And I find myself, so far from being single in this opinion, that none differ from me.—But, my Lord—when the application and use of these abilities, is made the subject of conversation:—If I should say, you employ them to preserve the most essential parts of the constitution, and to promote the happiness of your country, —almost every man would contradict me.

All men are subject to delusions: the greatest men, to the greatest variety; they range in an unbounded region, and are elevated above the common standard of human views and actions. This is my reason, for presuming to think, that I can throw out any hints, which may be of use to your Lordship.

In

DEDICATION.

In attending to your decisions and judgments on some important causes, I have, sometimes, thought, you were led astray, even by your genius.

In government, as in common life, we, often, regulate our measures by the opinions we entertain of those, whom they may concern. Some of those opinions we form, by supposing ourselves in their situation; and others, by delineating, in imagination, such characters as, we think, will suit them.

I need not point out, to your lordship, the errors, to which a man of genius, is peculiarly liable, in forming his opinion. The difference is so great between him, and the persons he is to represent,

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present, or to delineate; that it is extremely difficult to make the deductions and allowances which are proper for them.

The man, who knows most of mankind, is not, always, the man of genius; but, often, the man of, merely, common sense; whose talents are those, which are possessed by, almost, the whole species; and who judges rightly, because he judges of others by himself. Hence the distinction of genius and common-sense: hence the numerous mistakes of the former; and the safe and unerring judgments of the latter.

But this advantage of common-sense, genius might make all its own, while it remained

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remained in possession of those peculiar privileges, which nature had given it. Every laborious drudge, in every science, was designed, by providence, for its service. He toils, in the fields of knowledge, and gathers stores, which he has not capacity to improve for any benefit to mankind. The materials, thus collected:—the man of genius has, only, to put out his hand; and he becomes, in, almost, any way he pleases, a blessing to the world.

Could I imagine, that my allusions would appear so apt, and be so easily applied, as those which I have, often, heard from your lordship, it would not be necessary to explain what I mean.—That you may have been led into mistakes,

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takes, in your opinions of the people of this country, and in the counsels, you are supposed to have given to some of its governors: not, because you are inferior, in understanding, to any one of it, but, perhaps, because, you have not taken the pains to estimate the merit of that people: that you cannot come at a perfect knowledge of them, only, by philosophical reflection, or the most ingenious attention to the litigious, and the criminal; but, likewise, by condescending to receive information from others, whom you may, justly, think much inferior to yourself.

I believe your lordship will admit, that the body of the people, throughout his majesty's dominions, is in a state of disorder,

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disorder. It is the general opinion, that a system of administration has been, for some time, taken up and pursued, unfriendly to the liberties of the kingdom. You may affect to despise those who pretend to support such an opinion: My lord—the people are the best judges in many political questions: they feel all the effects of public measures; and, sometimes, they alone, can tell, whether they are proper or not.

The government must be faulty, when the people are unhappy. This is a maxim in policy never to be disputed.

It may be said, The people are their own enemies; and spurn those advantages which are designed for them by a wise administration. My lord, it is, almost,

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almost, impossible that this can ever be the case.

It is actually said, that we have so far lost our virtue, that we are incapable of liberty; and, therefore, that our legislature, or ministry will do well to change our form of government. I hope; nay, I believe, that this is not true. This kingdom acquired its liberty and greatness, as others have done, by industry, and by struggling against oppression; and, as they have lost, it will lose, it by luxury and corruption. But, as every state has had some peculiar circumstances which hastened or retarded it's rise, so it may have those which will hasten or retard it's dissolution. These are often concealed from common ob-

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DEDICATION.

servation: they are not, always, known to men of the greatest penetration: and they render false some of our most probable conjectures concerning the events of a community.

But, my Lord, if such an opinion, could be maintained, would the inference be made for any administration, that was not highly wicked? Every man, who avails himself of the misfortune of his country, to increase that misfortune, and to hasten it's ruin, is, clearly, a public enemy. The great offices of government are filled up by men, not in order to watch for any opportunities to distress; but to guard the interests, and to promote the happiness of the people.

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DEDICATION.

I need not tell your lordship, why government takes place; why such a number of appointments are made of great dignity and profit: not for the sake of those by whom they are immediately enjoyed; but of those, who bear the expence of them, and who are affected by all the actions of the persons who fill them up. I presume, it could never enter your imagination, that you were born a chief justice; that the dignity of that office was annexed to your person; and that it's emoluments arose out of your patrimony. My Lord, you are one of the first magistrates of the people of England; and your highest duty on earth, is to that people:—you may shew that duty in a manner that will immortalize your name, and make

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you happy to the last moments of your existence. Save your country, my Lord: it is in your power: it is not, too late, for you: forget what is past: forgive any offences against you; they are not objects for the attention of your mind: turn it to those which are worthy of you; turn it to the state of your country; every difficulty in our affairs would give way to your understanding, and your eloquence.

You might realize a scene, that must, often, have presented itself to your imagination:—An extensive, opulent empire, disjoined by intestine broils, corrupted by its opulence, and on the brink of destruction; a constitution, the work of ages, the price of blood,

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and the admiration of the world—restored by a vigorous exertion of your distinguished abilities:—A people, divided in itself; venal, corrupt, licentious; distracted by dangers on every side, and driven, almost, to despair, by a wicked administration:—soothed into harmony and peace; and brought into security and happiness, by your wisdom, and public spirit:—Can you, my Lord, let such a scene pass through your mind, without enjoying a pleasure, superior to any thing you have ever experienced from the favour of a prince, or the honours and emoluments that may have long courted you?—Despise these little things; convince the world, in spite of it's ill-nature, that you are,
indeed,

DEDICATION.

indeed, the great man:—forgive your
enemies;—and save your country.

I am,

My LORD,

Your lordship's most obedient,

Humble servant,

The AUTHOR.

AN APOLOGY

FOR THE TITLE.

THE author has assumed the character of a Philosopher, because it is that which he aims at, though, perhaps, he may be conscious, he does not always possess it.

If the following sentiments, ascribed to a philosopher, are becoming such a character; the title will not be improper, however the appellation may suit with the private imperfections of the writer.

In the dialogues, he has given his antagonists such sentiments as, he thought, most suitable to their situations and professions; taking care, however, that their abilities to support them, should be such as he could manage.

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T H E
P H I L O S O P H E R.

FIRST CONVERSATION.

PHILOSOPHER, COURTIER, WHIG.

The reader may suppose the philosopher in his parlour, or in his study; the courtier and whig on a visit to him: and that after the first ceremonies of every company, he says :

PHILOSOPHER.

I Expected to have had some others of our friends here, as this is thought to be a time of leisure :—

WHIG,

From public business it is :—

COURTIER.

Unless you will call the important transactions of the city of London, public business.

B

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ness. The apotheosis of *that there man*, who was lord-mayor, is determined upon:—the finest orator, and the greatest patriot the world ever saw.

PHILOSOPHER.

Let the poor man rest.

COURTIER.

Rest his soul, say I;—though I think it impossible; for he never seemed capable of quiet.

WHIG.

He had his failings; but he meant well; and was of service to his country.

PHILOSOPHER.

If you please, gentlemen, we will quit this man; his statue will soon be erected; and then, we must expect to be tired with the subject of his virtues and his vices.

WHIG.

Pray, is there any news? Is the change of the ministry that is talked of, likely to take place?

COURTIER.

Yes—as the news-papers say:—such a report

port serves to amuse idle people, and set politicians by the ears.

WHIG.

I believe you will find it to be more than a report. My L——, last week, had a long conference with a great personage; the plans then sketched out, were approved of: And the first effects of them, will be to disperse a ministry that can hardly hold together, and must have given great uneasiness to the k—g.

COURTIER.

You are exceedingly mistaken. The ministry is in perfect unanimity, and in the highest favour with the k—g. It consists of men of spirit, who do their duty; are content with the sense of having done it, and the favor of their master; and can despise the clamor of a mob.

WHIG.

Content with the sense of having done their duty! Was it their duty to oppress the people, in order to enrich themselves and their creatures; for that is all they have been doing: and, instead of being, as you say,

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in perfect unanimity, they are perpetually quarrelling with each other for the spoils of their country.

PHILOSOPHER.

They are brave men truly ! I wish, however, that some of them were exchanged for better, whether out of, what is called, the opposition, or not. I pay but little regard to the frequent accounts, “ that a great man “ had a long conference with a great personage :” they are generally false ; inserted to make a paper sell ; and composed by a printer’s secretary. When this is not the case ; and I am better assured, than from a public paper, that there has been such a conference, I hardly hope for any good effects from it.

I suppose, when the king sees his ministry under embarrassments, he enquires into the cause ; and, sometimes, finds it to be in the measures of the opposition. He, therefore, sends for one or more of the leaders ; endeavours to learn their views ; and, by means of some bauble, detaches them from their connections.

THE PHILOSOPHER.

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WHIG.

Such practices have been unsuccessful on the present opposition; it is composed of men who are above such a temptation,

PHILOSOPHER.

I believe they would be obliged to any man who would fairly support such an opinion.

WHIG.

You would not insinuate any thing to the contrary? Can you suspect, that men of honor and rank, who have solemnly pledged themselves to their country to support its cause, would be bought off, by any thing in the power of a k—g to give.

PHILOSOPHER.

To be plain with you, I do really suspect that many, nay most of those who compose the opposition, may be bought off, as you call it.

COURTIER.

Yes, yes; we know they may: but they are not thought to be worth the price, which they set upon themselves.

PHILOSOPHER.

I do not mean, that they would accept a sum of money, as the price of their desertion ; —but, if the k—g would gratify the wishes of one for power, of another for titles, and of another for appointments to himself and his friends :—how many, do you think, would remain of the present opposition ?

WHIG.

You are severe, even to detraction. Can you think of the D— of R—d, the D— of B—n, the D— of P—d, the M— of R—m, the M— of G—y ; L— C—m, L— C—m, L— T—le, L— L—n, S G— S—le, and many gentlemen more, of fortune and integrity ; and yet say, the opposition is to be bought off ?

PHILOSOPHER.

Sir, I do not pretend to be sufficiently acquainted with the characters of these gentlemen, to point out the means of corrupting them. Nor should I think myself justifiable in hinting my private suspicions of any man
who

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who has not been already corrupted. But, when I consider the whole body; that it is actuated, and, in some measure, directed by a man, whom I fear to be venal;—I cannot avoid having some disagreeable thoughts of those who compose it.

WHIG.

You mean, perhaps, L—C—m?

PHILOSOPHER.

I do mean him.

WHIG.

And do you apprehend him to be venal?

PHILOSOPHER.

Indeed I do: and I am sorry to have so much reason. If he had preserved his character with his country, many of its present misfortunes would not have befallen it: or if they had, he would have been the person to remove them. He has, now, in a great measure, lost the public confidence,

WHIG.

How?—by having served it more than any other man?

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PHILOSOPHER.

I am as sensible of the importance of my L—C——m's services, as you can be. If you please, therefore, I will pass over his faults : And wish, as many do, that his present humor may hold till our public affairs are set on a better footing.

WHIG.

I do not thank you for your tenderness. Every man has faults : but when you say of any one, that he has those, which have forfeited the public confidence ; and, when that is denied :—I think, you ought to point them out.

PHILOSOPHER.

Is that the case ?—Then I must bring to your mind, such things, as, I know, will give you pain ? But you can hardly have forgotten, that he accepted of a large legacy, on a condition, which he immediately set himself to break : and distressed the ministry, by opposing measures, which he immediately adopted and pursued, when he got into it.

WHIG.

The condition was a foolish one ; and not
insisted

THE PHILOSOPHER. 9

insisted upon ; and he was obliged to adopt measures which could not be changed, when they had been so long pursued. This was, evidently, the public opinion ; and every man seemed to be convinced, that he had sufficient reasons for his conduct.

PHILOSOPHER.

I can assure you, that was not the case. People forgave his faults, in consideration of his merits ; as they have often done evil, when good hath come. They will again forgive ; and even idolize him, if he exerts his abilities for their assistance and relief.

WHIG.

You will not join them, I suppose : it will not become a philosopher to pretend any regard for a man whom he thinks to be venal.

PHILOSOPHER.

I perceive, you are offended at that word.

WHIG.

I am, at its application. There is hardly any man to whom it could be so ill applied, as to L— C——m, whom every body knows to be generous, and to disregard money.

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PHILOSOPHER.

A man who squanders, is not generous ; and none but fools think so. A man may be generous, and disregard money ; and yet may be, in some sense, venal.

WHIG.

You seem to have forgotten, that, while he was in office, he suffered many opportunities of enriching himself to pass, which he might have taken, without bringing any imputation on his honesty : and that, when he quitted his employments, he was, really, poor.

PHILOSOPHER.

My L— C——m acts a part well ; but, I am afraid, he is only an actor. He declined against pensioners with a fervor, which appeared to be the warmth of honesty ; and yet,—he is become a pensioner. He declined some perquisites of office, in a manner, that gave the public an opinion of his disinterestedness and greatness of mind ; and yet he took the estate of an half-ideot ; and has suffered his heirs and relations, who had formed

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formed very reasonable expectations on his death, and some of whom were poor, to bear their disappointment as they can. Every bad man has his price. L—d C——m is not a good man. He has, however, very considerable talents; he affects the most stubborn integrity; and the noblest patriotism:—his pretensions have been credited; and he has a character to support:—his price was therefore high. L— B—te saw this, and laid before him, first a large pension; then a title of great honor; and then a lucrative and easy place:—

COURTIER.

—And all his hatred of what he called corruption, and all his patriotism, immediately vanished.

PHILOSOPHER.

He, in a great measure, deserted the people:—but they will always find him of some use, until the court can gratify his ambition, and reward him according to his own opinion of his merit; which it is not in the power of the court to do. Besides, he loves
to

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to attack dignities, and to make daring and popular speeches. His eloquence is not of the insinuating, enchanting kind, which heals divisions, and reconciles the minds of men at variance; it is stormy and terrific; and would be useless, out of an opposition.

WHIG.

Indeed, Sir, I can hardly have patience to hear you speak thus of the man, whom I look upon to be the greatest of the age; to whom, we are so much indebted for the successes of a glorious war; and whose spirit and eloquence is now, the greatest terror of a corrupt administration.

PHILOSOPHER.

I think highly of his eloquence,—in the view of being popular. His conduct, in the late war, was spirited, and fortunate; but the successes of it were not entirely owing to him, though he, always, brought himself forward, to receive all the glories of it. When he became minister, disasters, and shame had roused up the military spirit of the nation; which had never possessed the
same

same resources of wisdom, courage, and money. Schemes of public conduct were forced on his notice; the bravest spirits stood ready to execute them; and the purse of the people was ever open.—Shall the successes of that time, be said to be the work of any single man? How improbable; how destitute of truth; and how ungrateful to the merit and memory of those who bore so distinguished a part in them!

Plutarch says, that, when Miltiades desired to wear an olive garland, in commemoration of the victory at Marathon; an Athenian said, “If you, alone, did fight against the Persians, it is just, that you alone should be crowned; but, if others did participate in the victory, they ought, also, to have a part in the honor.”

I have, already, hinted my opinion of my L—C—m’s present conduct. He attacks the ministry, with boldness; and with a kind of eloquence, which, though it has not answered his purpose of a change in their measures,

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measures, has probably been a restraint on them.

WHIG.

My L— C——m is, now, in an opposition, the most formidable, and the most reputable, that has subsisted in this country for many years: his political abilities are respected, and his views approved of by those who form it: and the hopes of the public are fixed, principally, on him.

PHILOSOPHER.

I shall rejoice as much as any man to see him answer the highest expectations of the public. It is a glorious distinction to be considered, as a man, who can render an important service to his country. I sincerely hope he will ever deserve it.

As to the opposition, I cannot help being of opinion, that the union of the gentlemen who compose it, is upon the principle of interest. Many of those you mentioned have, no doubt, views of public good. My L— C——n, in particular, does credit to it. There may be objections to some parts of his conduct,

THE PHILOSOPHER. 15

conduct, but it has been very great and laudable, upon the whole; and the public may safely depend upon his assistance in the best measures for public service. As for the rest, and particularly the retainers of party, they may be compared to a body of Drawcansirs, for ever engaged in quarrels, and always closing with that side, which bids the greatest price for their services: and, as our grenadiers wear the motto of their troop in their caps; so, these worthies bear impressed on their foreheads the motto of their corps;
Secus utramque partem.

COURTIER.

Sir, you speak like a real philosopher; one who sees into the characters of men; who is above an attachment to party, and a friend to the loyalty and obedience which are due to government. I thought you, reading, visionary men, were always discontented, and all republicans in your hearts. But I now think very differently. I wish you had a good place;--

WHIG.

WHIG.

Or a pension, which, you know, to a philosopher, would not be corruption :—

COURTIER.

Upon my honor, you ridicule, most excellently, our factious, turbulent patriots. We have had, of late, nothing but confusion, riot, and sedition : all respect to government is lost, and things are going to ruin, as you say, because a selfish opposition cannot change places with the ministry.

PHILOSOPHER.

I beg your pardon, Sir, for contradicting you : but, I have never said any such thing.

I see that you are obliged to adopt the general opinion, that things are going to ruin. But I have not said, that this is owing to the conduct of the opposition. I do not think so.

COURTIER.

—Then I know not what you think.

PHILOSOPHER.

Does it follow,—because I do not approve of many things in the conduct of the opposition,—

sition,—that I must attribute all our public evils to it? I consider these evils as arising from another quarter. I have only expressed my opinion, that those who undertake to remove them, are not, sufficiently, qualified for the work.

COURTIER.

I really do not understand you. I thought you had intimated, that our public turbulence arises from the attempts of those who are out, to get the places of those who are in: and, now, you appear to contradict yourself.

PHILOSOPHER.

I suppose, you are not ignorant that the people are uneasy and discontented.

COURTIER.

You mean those people who are connected with the faction.

PHILOSOPHER.

Nay, but I mean the people, in general, who cannot have that connection.

COURTIER.

The rabble; who know not what they would have; catch at any pretence to be li-

C

centious;

centious; and are glad to throw off the restraints of government.

PHILOSOPHER.

Softly, Sir. I look upon what you say, as the cant of a court, which may affect to despise a part of the community, the most important in itself; and that, for which every other part was appointed.

I have wished to know, what ideas, you, courtiers, entertain of the people you call mob, rabble, canaille, scum of the earth, &c. I have, sometimes, thought it to be this:—A species of human beings, of a low class, with very small capacities of reasoning, and enjoyment;—to rule and govern whom, nature has appointed a more exalted species, with superior capacities, for their rank and employment.

I wonder no advocate for arbitrary power, has thought of this argument.

Those, who have pretended to defend the slave-trade,—that distinguishing honor of Christian merchants,—have insinuated, that the poor negroes are only cattle on two legs:
and

and they use them worse than they do meer cattle; perhaps for presuming to appear in the human form. But these unhappy wretches, have given so many proofs of good sense, and good dispositions; and have appeared, often, so much superior to most of their masters;—that no one, now, has the effrontery to hint at the distinction.

This would be the event of a disquisition, on the difference in a community between the governors and the governed. If our superiors were called upon to produce their titles to distinction and government,—instead of superior understanding, or superior virtue,---many of them would be obliged to produce, what I should be ashamed to mention; and most, if not all of them, would fail in their claim.

COURTIER.

So, so! I thought I should find you out: you are a downright republican; and, let me tell you, the government would consider you as an enemy.

PHILOSOPHER.

You are much mistaken; I am not a republican,

publican, nor could the government, with reason, consider me as an enemy.

I have read the histories of all the considerable empires which we know of, and, like many other speculative men, have amused myself, by comparing the advantages and disadvantages of one form of government, with those of the other. That of a republic, or rather of a democracy, is the most pleasing in speculation; because the most agreeable to the principles of natural equity, and the most suitable to a state of simplicity, innocence, and virtue. In such a state, no man, who was reasonable, and free from prepossession, ever doubted, but a democracy was the best form of government. But, when you suppose, innocence broken in upon, and vice to have had admission; you must change your plan: and, in proportion as it gains ground, and varies its appearances, you must vary your forms of restraint. If it was possible to know the quantity of vice in any country, it would be practicable, though it might not be easy, to estimate and suit the powers of controuling it; as it is, to
suit

suit a democracy to a simple state of nature. But, as this is impossible, so it is, to contrive a system of administration that will, exactly, suit the state of any people. This we know to be fact. No attempt of this kind has ever succeeded: and forms of government have arisen, from a combination of circumstances; and from a coalition of inferior plans, some well, some ill designed; under the direction of providence; not from general, and well-digested systems of men; or any single and masterly exertions of the human understanding.

You see, I cannot be called a republican; nor can you enlist me, with propriety, under any political denomination.

I, often, amuse my fancy, in contriving the most perfect form of ideal government: but I am attached to it, only in the manner I am to Plato's Republic; More's Utopia; or the Millennium; agreeable subjects of contemplation; but not proper forms of government for men. I should rejoice to see them possessing the degree of virtue which would fit them for such forms; but I would not

censure them for not having it, while I am sensible that if they had, my own imperfections would exclude me their communities. *The powers that be, are ordained of God*; this is true, in the same sense as, *whatever is, is right*. Forms of government, are generally suited to the circumstances of the people. I submit to that system of laws, in England, which I consider as naturally arising out of our civil and religious circumstances; as the best for the time; and which, however improvable, I believe, is not to be totally and suddenly changed, without destructive and fatal consequences.

I have given you my political creed: and you will, now, have no difficulty to understand me, on this subject, in any future conversation.

COURTIER.

I shall have no difficulty, I believe: and I much approve of your sentiments of government.

WHIG.

I am much mistaken, if you do not, soon, change your opinion.

COURTIER.

You, certainly, are mistaken :---And pray observe, if the powers that be, are ordained of God,---what is to be said of the deposition, and murder of kings; disobedience to the decisions of law, and of parliament; petitions; remonstrances; and the various methods of menacing, and insulting an established government.

PHILOSOPHER.

I perceive, gentlemen, that our conversation will not, soon, be at an end. You, Sir, have, now, opened a subject, which cannot be exhausted in a few minutes: and on which, perhaps, I may put your patience to the trial, for more reasons than one.

COURTIER.

You are, now, going to your paradoxes, I suppose. Sometimes you are on one side of the question; sometimes on another; and sometimes, on neither. It is the case with you philosophers: and I do not wonder, that you are said to be men of no principles.

PHILOSOPHER.

Nor do I wonder at it. A man in politics, as well as in religion, who does not adhere to the principles of some party, incurs the general displeasure; and, as he differs, in some things, from all parties; they all agree, that he is a man of no principles.

This, however, must be, often, the case of every man, who will divest his mind of all prepossession, and sincerely enquire, and judge for himself. He finds every system, in many things, defective; and the principles of every party, in many respects, dubious; in some, false. As a philosopher, he has no reason for adopting them, in the gross; as a member of society, he may have such a reason.

COURTIER.

And, without giving way to such a reason, the business of this world would not be carried on.

PHILOSOPHER.

That is a question of some nicety. I often find myself, I confess, under the necessity of subscribing to the opinion, that the affairs
of

of this world, must be carried on by associations, under general denominations, and with general principles. A man of a public profession, or business, whether sacred or civil, must, therefore, have, what politicians call a public, and a private conscience. I do not mean, that he must act the rogue; and pretend to believe one thing in public, and another in private: but he must act for the defence of all the principles of his party; and the security of many things, which may appear to him, ill-founded, but are links of union, without which, it must break up, and disperse.—This, I say, must, often, be the case with the religious, or civil, politician.—But it may be otherwise with the philosopher. He is at liberty to judge of things, as they are in themselves, or in relation to a general interest; and not as they relate to the particular interest of any party.

As the principles, which come under his examination, are, generally, the produce of single understandings, under the influence of political expedience, of interest, and of haste; it is no wonder, that they will not, long,
bear

bear his eye.—Hence his disagreement with those who are devoted to any denomination:—and, hence, the opinion, that he has no principles.

COURTIER.

Very well, Sir; you make philosophers most sublime beings:—but, as you say, they are not fit for the business of this world, one need not fear a competition with them in any views of preferment.

PHILOSOPHER.

They are not formed for competition:—for in a state of things, which will admit of their advancement, they naturally rise, and none can prevent them: but, in a state, which will not admit of it, they are, of all men, the least to be dreaded, as competitors.

COURTIER.

I understand your satire, very well; and could apply it to present times, according to your meaning. But, I will only thank you, for giving me a reason, which I have much wanted, why a man, of your abilities, should move in so private a sphere?

PHILOSOPHER.

You are satirical, in return, upon me.— I should be glad to assign, with truth, such a reason for my present situation. But, I am afraid, my sphere, as you call it, is not of my own chusing. Our lots, in general, seem to be cast for us: that should induce us to be candid on those mistakes, and misbehaviour, which is frequently found in particular stations.

Persons in the hurry of public business, often think that they have engaged in it, for the public good; and they excuse their deviations by expediency, and the view of that good:—those, who are sunk in obscurity, console themselves, frequently, for having preferred, among the objects of human pursuit, the satisfactions of innocence, and the pleasures of goodness and truth. It is happy, that men can, thus, make a virtue of necessity. But these reasons, as they are called, are consolations, found out when the lot is cast; and principles have but little influence, in determining what that lot shall be.

COURTIER.

COURTIER.

Your account is very candid, as well as ingenious. I am much pleased with it: and you have put me in better humor to continue the conversation, on the state of our affairs, and the subjects of the present popular discontents.

PHILOSOPHER.

I have no objection to continue such a conversation: and you know, if I am ever mistaken in my political opinions, it must be, from the weakness of my understanding, not from any bias that can lie on my heart.

COURTIER.

I allow it. I, greatly, approve of your behaviour, as a religionist. You bear the name of a party; and your interest would lead you to adopt its principles, and espouse its cause. When I perceive, therefore, that you think and speak with freedom, and against your immediate interest, I am the more willing to attend you on a subject, where you are more at liberty.

PHILOSOPHER.

The task, therefore, lies on my abilities,
and

and knowledge ; which, I assure you, I will endeavor to apply to the best advantage.

You have given me the name of philosopher : and I must assume so much of the character, as to descant upon terms, which in this, as in every other enquiry, ought to be defined.

There is hardly a word, in political disquisitions, which so often occurs as constitution. But, I conceive it to be an improper one : the allusion in it does not hold, in the most material parts ; as, I imagine, it ought to do, in one of so much importance, and which is, often, analyzed with so much exactness.

A constitution, as that of the human body, means a compleat and perfect system ; and includes the idea of permanence in the structure and disposition of all its parts. For this reason, I think, it is ill applied to government, which is ever liable to variation.

COURTIER.

What word would you supply its place with ?

PHILOSOPHER.

PHILOSOPHER.

Indeed I cannot tell.

COURTIER.

Suppose you say, institution?

PHILOSOPHER.

That comes nearer to my idea; but it would sound weak and quaint; and the use of it, be laughed at, as affectation, in a single person. I mention my objection to the word constitution, that when I use it, as I shall do, I may not be misunderstood, as meaning what, most, if not all, our political writers, seem to mean by it, a permanent and finished establishment.

COURTIER.

I suppose I may take for granted, then, at the same time you give us your definition of the word constitution, you give your idea of the English government.

PHILOSOPHER.

You may.

COURTIER.

The sooner you begin, the better, in my opinion.

PHILOSOPHER.

PHILOSOPHER.

The talent of making a speech, I believe, nature gave me only in a low degree : and I have not cultivated it, because it renders every man disagreeable and offensive, except when in parliament ; at the bar ; in the pulpit, or endeavouring to influence any public assembly. But I must, now, attempt an extemporary dissertation.

COURTIER.

Perhaps you need not. One of us, now and then, will probably interrupt you, and bring you down into a conversation.

PHILOSOPHER.

I must confess my resolution fails me, at the difficulty of conveying a determinate idea, of what is so, only, for a short time. I hope, however, to set your imaginations afloat ; and, as you have read the English history, you will be able to pursue it's variations ; and, always, to know what I mean by the English constitution.

WING.

I am all attention ; and want exceedingly to hear what you have to say.

PHILOSOPHER.

I have read the history of England, as many speculative men have done, with a view to find out, in some remote times, the great outlines of that constitution, which the friends of liberty have written and spoken of, with so much respect and admiration. I need not tell you, that I was greatly disappointed. I found my renowned ancestors, like those of other men, ignorant, brutal, and savage. In this state they had, probably, ever been, when Julius Cæsar attempted to get possession of their country. What he has said of their courage, and love of liberty, we have had, a thousand times, repeated, from the commendable pride of their posterity. I suppose, there can be no doubt of their courage: it is the character of savages; and it becomes fury when their personal liberty, and their lives are attempted. — This love of liberty, and aversion to conquest, I have the same admiration of, in them, which I have of a similar affection in the inhabitants of America: and I read of their defeats and ill treatment with regret. But I can find no more of the
English

English constitution among them, than in the rude principles and practices of any other uncivilized barbarians.

It is in vain to look for it, while the Romans continued here; and the Piëts ravaged the country.

When the Saxons had butchered the greatest part of the inhabitants, and had fixed the seats of their dominion so as to command, almost, the whole island, they introduced their own forms of government; and, we may suppose, with little or no regard to the institutions of a people, which they had, nearly, exterminated.—Here our philosophical politicians have fixed their standards; and disputed, almost every line of the history, for their respective schemes of English government. If you believe their accounts, each of them has gained the victory. My opinion is, that if, by any fatality, we had been bound, for ever, to the systems of those times; the parties for which both are advocates, would have been sufferers in their favorite interests: the king, would have been more confined

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than he is in his power; and the people, in the enjoyment of liberty. However, from what we know of the customs of those times; and the codes of some of their kings; we can affirm, the government was not a simple monarchy; and that the people, in various divisions, and by deputations, had a great share in the appointment and execution of public business. But we do not, in my opinion, find that perfect, glorious model, which the advocates of liberty call our antient constitution; and of which, many of them seem to apprehend, that very few traces remain in our present vitiated and corrupted one.

We are not to look for this, in the first, or in any age of the Norman government. The innovations then made, were unfavorable to liberty; and the people were little better than slaves; until magna charta was obtained; which we may consider as the first stone of our present establishment. Their circumstances were something improved, at that time, and by the regulations of Henry the Seventh.—The reformation, though it increased

increased for a time the power of the crown, gave rise to a spirit of enquiry, and disquisition; and laid the foundation of that knowledge, to which all our institutions, ever since, have been much indebted.

In the unhappy reigns of the Stuarts; and, at the revolution, the people were in a state to contend for their liberties, upon, almost, equal ground: and they claimed them, as the privileges of their antient constitution. Hence, their petitions, and bills of rights; and their demands on the crown, in various forms. In every subsequent contest, the advocates of liberty, have insisted principally on their original rights; and referred to an antient constitution, in which these rights were ascertained. But I cannot help thinking, that they were mistaken: and, if they had managed the dispute in another way; though, at the time, they had not gained so much upon the crown; yet they would have opened a field for their successors, where they would have contended with much greater advantages.

WHIG.

You seem to me to deny us our liberties ; or, at least, the propriety of pleading our right to them.

PHILOSOPHER.

Have a little patience, Sir;—I will explain myself.

I cannot help thinking, that they were mistaken ; not, in pleading their right to liberty ; but in resting it, principally, on foundations, which were not, always, to be found ; and, which would not be of such consequence as they made it, whether they were to be found or not.

One of the greatest political errors, committed by mankind, has been their adherence, at all events, to the original principles of their government. They appear to think that those principles were laid down by the Almighty ; and that they were, for ever, to accommodate themselves to them, however inconvenient they might prove to be.

COURTIER.

But, without that adherence, no govern-
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ment could, long, subsist: where some plan is not drawn; and some principles given; we are at an uncertainty, and have nothing, to which we can refer our measures,

PHILOSOPHER.

I am far from wishing, that men may be left without principles to refer themselves to, in their political measures. But I blame them for adhering to those principles, indiscriminately, which were laid down, in the rude state of society; when the faculties of men were but little improved, and their rights but little understood.

I have found it a fruitless, and not very significant employment, to enquire into the methods, by which men came to form themselves into societies. Their, general, reason is implanted in nature; and their views, whether tacit or declared, are those of security and happiness. Every state, however, may have had, particular, reasons and views arising from its own circumstances. When the community is formed, the best regulations, in the opinion of the legislators, are deter-

mined upon, for its welfare ; and, something like, a system of government is sketched out. This system will be adapted to the circumstances in which the people were brought together. We will suppose it, to be the best in that case : yet, when those circumstances are no more, the system will cease to be proper, or, perhaps, useful.

If we might imagine a multitude of reasonable, and independent people, met with a view of entering into society, their system would approach as near to perfection as any which man can invent ; and be productive of the highest liberty, which he is formed to enjoy. But if we should suppose many of the people unreasonable ; and any influence exerted by men of selfish, and ambitious designs ; their plan would be defective, and their liberty abridged, in proportion to the degrees of that folly, and that influence.

If we should suppose an army, or banditti, settled in a conquered country,—the general origin of communities, and governments ; their civil constitution would resemble their military discipline ; and be better formed for
security

security and conquest, than for civil liberty and happiness.—But, as the rights of an individual, are not affected by, accidental circumstances, attending his coming into the world ; no more are, those of a community, by any circumstances attending its formation, and first existence. Both may labor under disadvantages, from the peculiar circumstances attending those events ; but their natural, unalienable rights cannot be set aside : and, it is the duty of the one and the other, to remove those disadvantages, and to improve their condition, as much as possible.

The state of society, should be considered as a state of progression, from smaller degrees of civil liberty and happiness to greater ; and approaching to that perfection, of which we have an idea ; but which we may never be capable of enjoying.

The contentions, and wars of parties on the question of prerogative and liberty, have not, therefore, been properly conducted ; and the reasons assigned for them, have not, always, been sufficient ; I think, never the best. I would not lose a hair of my own

head, or pluck off one of another's to restore a Saxon or Norman constitution; and to perpetuate it as the model of our civil government. I would lose my life to obtain that improvement, and perfection of civil liberty, which every society has a right to, and which is capable of producing the highest degree of human happiness. And if, in this cause, I trample on the interests of ambition, and the imagined rights of its votaries, it would be my duty; as those ought, always, to be sacrificed to the interests, and rights of the community.

COURTIER.

Hush;—you will speak treason, if you do not take care.

PHILOSOPHER.

Never fear; I intend to take care.

COURTIER.

Upon your principles, persons would be justified in overturning and destroying government, by violent rebellion.

PHILOSOPHER.

You mistake me. I blame the advocates
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of liberty, that they have contended for it, as a right, only, by prescription, when it was theirs, also, by nature; because, they confined their claims to those low degrees only which had been enjoyed; and precluded that enlargement and perfection, which they would have reserved an undoubted right to pursue, if they had rested their pretensions on the foot of nature, as well as precedent.

COURTIER.

You forget, intirely, the rights and prerogatives of princes. I was not mistaken, in supposing that, in your heart, you are a republican.

PHILOSOPHER.

The rights and prerogatives of princes are very serious things in the present political state of the world: but they are words, almost without meaning, in a philosophical disquisition.

You may suppose a king to obtain his dignity, any way you please; and his rights and prerogatives, are, either, usurped powers, or trusts, committed to him by the community.

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I need not be at any pains to prove, that usurped powers may be set aside, when the community is able, and disposed to do it.—The other powers, I must treat with more tenderness; they ought to be so treated: though my opinion is, that they should be set aside, when the interests of the community require it.

COURTIER.

You had better say, at once, that a king can have no right, or prerogative at all.

PHILOSOPHER.

You are impatient, Sir.—You will allow every usurped and pernicious power to be void?

COURTIER.

Every pernicious power is so: and every usurped power may be so, likewise, in the usurper himself: but a successor may, legally, take to, and keep possession of a power, which may have been usurped by his predecessor, and, being beneficial, or harmless, was left in his hands, and fell, like any possession, to his natural heir.

PHILOSOPHER.

It can never become legal by being so suffered.

COURTIER.

It becomes his right, as king; and by having the tacit sanction of the community.

PHILOSOPHER.

There are some cases, in which it is considered as a power of his office; but that only, so long as it is beneficial.

COURTIER.

Then it is no right at all.

PHILOSOPHER.

I cannot help it. I know of no other that a man can have in the character of a magist ate.

COURTIER.

Phoo :—It is ridiculous to talk of prerogatives and rights, which may be given, and taken away at the caprice of the multitude.

PHILOSOPHER.

A legal and constitutional magistrate can have none but what are given him. He is the officer of the community; his powers are the

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the powers of the community; and are to be continued or withheld, according to its interest or pleasure. Nothing, therefore, can be more ridiculous, than the common arguments for prerogatives;—that they are powers in ancient possession; and have been, in the nature of property, transmitted down in a regular and lawful succession.

When a magistrate is intrusted with power for the public service, I think it impossible to assign a good reason, why he should convert it into a property; and, when its end is answered, and it is found useless or pernicious; why he should have a right to transmit it, as an inheritance, to his successor.—The matter is not mended, if the power be usurped; for, in that case, it ever was, and ever will be unconstitutional.

COURTIER.

If this be true, how comes it to pass, that you insist so much on magna charta, and many other grants, obtained from kings; who, according to you, have nothing to bestow.

PHILOSOPHER.

My life is, undoubtedly, my own: and yet, there may be situations, in which another may have the power of it; and I may be obliged to beg it, at his hands. This may happen to be the case with the rights of a people. It might be so, in some measure, at the time of obtaining the privileges you mention. Or, perhaps, men in general, did not understand their own rights; and those who procured concessions from the crown, had nothing less in view than procuring justice, and happiness to the people. But when circumstances are changed; and men are come to understand, and to have the power of recovering their rights; there can be no restraints on them, from the claims of any magistracy.

The rights of men, may be said to be enlarged, as their capacities are enlarged. To know them, is ever a sufficient title. If their ancestors, in ignorance, or under disadvantages, have allotted, or connived at, improper powers in any departments of government; it is, undoubtedly, their duty to remedy those errors:—

COURTIER.

—By destroying the officers, possessed of those powers; by murdering their kings.

PHILOSOPHER.

No;—that is not necessary:—it may, possibly, be a consequence. If a king will grasp at more, than he can make a good claim to; if, in support of ill-founded pretensions, he will meet his people in the field; their resentment may, possibly, carry them farther than justice may allow; and his destruction may be the consequence. It is better, however, that he should be destroyed, than that they should perish; for, the whole is greater than a part.

COURTIER.

You would then maintain the transactions of the grand rebellion, and the murder of Charles the First, to be beneficial, and meritorious.

PHILOSOPHER.

I was giving my opinion on general cases.—But if you chuse to bring on the affair of Charles the First, and the rebellion, as you
call

call it, I have no objection:—and, to be plain with you, I do look upon the murder of Charles the First, to have been beneficial; though not meritorious.

COURTIER.

So may be, the actions of the most abandoned villains on earth; such as most of those were, who acted the parts of that tragedy.

PHILOSOPHER.

Perhaps they were. I am far from justifying many of those people; or the action itself, as it was conducted. But, it was a first essay; and was performed, as first essays, in general, are, in an irregular, and imperfect manner. The first execution of a private villain, was, probably, murder, against every principle of government and law. The punishment was due in both cases, though the manner of inflicting it was unjustifiable: a warning, however, was given to offenders, to avoid a fate, which may be, legally, and calmly inflicted, when the improved state of government gives the power of the community
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its due influence; and the great ends of a civil institution are pursued with vigor and judgment.

COURTIER.

This would be an excellent doctrine, for the seditious patriots of the present days: What a pity, that you are not one of the supporters of the bill of rights.

PHILOSOPHER.

I am better pleased as I am: and indeed, I do not wish to add to that intemperance and fury, which may, possibly, possess many, in the present opposition, whose designs are very good.

COURTIER.

D—n them; they are all rascals. You said as much yourself, of many of them, just now:—and, as for those greasy thick-headed fellows, who speechify, and bellow, and belch at Guild-hall; they are below contempt.

PHILOSOPHER.

No subject of this realm, Sir, is beneath a decent notice, much less contempt; I mean,

mean, in a political view; and while he is under the protection of government.—Indeed, the worthiest part of those who suffer from the present administration, is not the loudest in complaints against it: many, it is probable, of those who are so, only aim at fame, notice, or some private advantage; some are merely splenetic; and others are wanton or ill-natured. It has often grieved me to think, that, in emergencies, like the present, so little assistance is to be expected from the wisest, and best part of the community. They see the conduct of affairs is seized upon by men who are desirous to push themselves into view, and meddle with things above their capacities: they keep out of a noisy scene, where the voice of reason cannot be heard; and content themselves, with wishing for some happy event from the jarring, and contention of ill-directed, and unmeaning materials.

WHIG.

What, in the name of goodness, do you mean?—You abuse all the world: you cannot spare the only people, who make any

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attempt

attempt to secure our liberties. Are we to suffer a vile administration, to strike at the root of the constitution? Are we to see our rights trampled upon, or given up, by a venal parliament:—and to sit still;—till you, philosophers, shake off your sloth and timidity; and add courage, to that wisdom, which you say, may save us?

PHILOSOPHER.

Upon my word, you are severe upon me: and I am afraid, there may be some truth as well as wit in your sarcasm. However, my opinion of the present state of our affairs remains, nearly, as it was:—That the conduct of administration has been imprudent and wrong, in many, very material instances; and that the conduct of the opposition, has been, also, imprudent and wrong.

COURTIER.

I will not admit the first part of your assertion.

WHIG.

Nor will I admit of the last.

PHILOSOPHER.

So;—I am, then, to engage two antagonists at the same time.

WHIG.

No:—we will deal fairly with you. Engage our friend, here, first of all: and, when you are at liberty, I may, possibly, try your strength.

PHILOSOPHER.

I think, I have no difficulty in shewing, that the conduct of administration has been wrong.

COURTIER.

It will not be sufficient to allege your meer opinion; the declarations of a faction; or the clamour of a mob.

PHILOSOPHER.

I shall not rest my proof, entirely, on either.—My own opinion is of no consequence. The very existence of, what you call, a faction, is a presumption of something wrong in administration: and the clamour of the mob, gives strength to that presumption:—there can be no smoke, where there

is no fire.—But our discontents are not confined to, what you call, the faction, or the mob. If you will produce any man in England, of common reflection; who is independent, and has no views on administration for himself or his friends; who will not greatly blame many of the measures lately pursued:—I will engage, to become your convert; and to think as you do.

COURTIER.

Persons of the sort you hint at, are always finding fault.

PHILOSOPHER.

Never without reason. But, they now complain; and are under serious apprehensions; though they may not appear in any of those oppositions, which have been, lately, set on foot. There is no doubt, Sir, but that the people, in general, are uneasy and discontented with the ministry; and this, I look upon, as an undoubted proof of a bad administration. The end of civil government, is to secure to the people of the community, the enjoyment of their most important

ant natural rights. To the security of these, other, less important, ones, are given up: while these are preserved, the people are happy; and, of course, they are orderly and quiet: when they are invaded, by those who were appointed to preserve them, they, immediately, feel the consequence, in the abatement of their happiness; and they become uneasy, and unruly.—This is the, general, state of things.—I do not say, that the people are, never, unhappy without reason. A community may be imposed upon, as well as an individual. But, that does not, very often, happen; and when it does, the deception does not continue long, and the deceiver has the contempt, or the punishment he deserves. However, a public deception is, hardly, possible in the present question. The subjects of contention are known, and established rights, which every man, of common sense, of every rank, is capable of forming his judgment upon.

COURTIER.

What?—upon general warrants; the treatment of colonies; the law of parliament;

and libels?—You know, they have furnished matter of altercation to our ablest political writers for several years; and a candid man has a difficulty to determine, even, with their assistance.

PHILOSOPHER.

Perhaps, he would have had no difficulty, if he had neglected that assistance.

Political writers, in general, are sophists; and, by having recourse to them, a man is, often, puzzled in the plainest cases.

When the present subjects of contention, were first started; the people, immediately, formed their opinion; and they hold that opinion firmly. Indeed, every man can judge of palpable deviations, from the end, and first principles of all government—That a secretary of state should have the power of issuing a general warrant to take any man into custody, upon suspicion, and to imprison him: break open his house; seize his papers; pry into his domestic affairs, and even, his secret thoughts; that he should be convicted of guilt, which he never intended

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to contract; should be punished for publishing what he endeavoured to conceal, and was actually published, only, by his accusers, after having procured it, by means dishonourable and felonious, in papers, whether printed, or written, does not signify, carefully locked up in his drawers:—where is the man, of common sense, incapable of giving his opinion on such a measure? under a government, the end of which, is to secure to us the peaceable possession of our houses and property; and where the fundamental laws of the constitution, repeatedly declare, that ‘no freeman shall be imprisoned and detained, without cause shewn, to which he may answer, according to law;’ but where there could be no confidence or enjoyment, if, at the will of any magistrate, our houses were liable to be broken into; our papers inspected; the private intercourses of our friendship and love; the state of our affairs; and the sallies of our imaginations, laid open to a world, abounding in hypocrisy, and fond of censure; or made matters of evidence against us, in a court of justice.

COURTIER.

Bravo!—Wilkes and liberty for ever!

PHILOSOPHER.

You are much mistaken, if you think, I have any particular attachment to Mr. Wilkes. I have no knowledge of him, but what accidentally arises from my mixing with the world. It is not material to me, what he is, as a man: and if I ever form a private judgment of his character, I deduct full half of what I commonly hear or read of his virtues, and his vices.—Whatever he be, he has been treated in an illegal and cruel manner:—and, though I should not wish to see him the patron of liberty, or to have any material interest of this country to depend on his conduct; yet I wish to have his cause supported; his injuries redressed; and the opportunity taken, which he has afforded, to regulate the constitution; so that a similar case to his, may never arise.

WHIG.

I perfectly agree with you, in the affair of Mr. Wilkes. But I wish to hasten to, a
more

more important, cause of our present discontent; the treatment of America.

PHILOSOPHER.

That is a question, of some difficulty, as well as importance. I could wish to see it considered, by some of the first men in the kingdom; and, in a manner, which would engage the attention of the legislature.

A mother-country, and colony, imply the ideas of parent and child; and, consequently, those of power, and protection; dependance and obedience. When the mother-country grants certain powers to the colony; it is, as a parent giving an appointment to a child: they are both rendered independant, in the right, use, and improvement of such donations.—I think, this allusion will hold good, in the present case. The colonies, with which England is now at variance, seem to be in the situation, I have hinted at. They are like children, who have left their father's house, taken their portions; and settled at a distance, for some conveniences which were inconsistent with the regulations of the father's family;

family; yet, holding a correspondence, in articles of mutual convenience; professing a filial submission; and stipulating obedience: while the father reaps the principal advantages of that submission, and obedience; and gives them the protection and security, which his power, and interest can afford.

COURTIER.

What do you allude to, by filial submission, in the case of the colonies?

PHILOSOPHER.

I allude to that respectful attention to the mother-country; which, like the attention of a man to his parent, shews itself in a regard to, and compliance with every reasonable requisition or advice: for, there can be no command; unless it be in stipulated cases.

COURTIER.

Then, it seems, Great-Britain has no power over the colonies; but in the allowed case of commerce.

PHILOSOPHER.

I do not see, it can have any, consistently
with

with their charters; unless there be cases expressly reserved out of those charters.— You must think, that I am not talking of royal governments.

COURTIER.

But the same power, which granted these charters, may resume them.

PHILOSOPHER.

Not without shewing cause.

COURTIER.

What should prevent it?

PHILOSOPHER.

Honour; justice; interest:—we are not talking of what meer power may do.

COURTIER.

Then, you would have Great Britain relinquish the submission of her colonies; and suffer them to acquire that independance, which they, evidently, long for.

PHILOSOPHER.

I would not have Great Britain to set up a claim, which it has no right to; and cannot, justly, support.

I do

I do not wonder, that the Americans long for independence, on a power that oppresses them:—and, I am sure, the measures lately pursued, will hasten the accomplishment of their wishes. They have grubbed up forests; built towns; they have a large trade, and are rich: they are, probably, laying the foundations of an opulent, and extensive empire. This is pretended to be foreseen by speculative men, the, *scientes temporum*, on each side the water. In America, they rejoice at the prospect: we, philosophers, and citizens of the world, rejoice at it also: and have, perhaps, a particular pleasure in the thought, that this empire is to be formed and possessed by a part, as it were, of our own family. But politicians, commonly, destitute of generous affections, view this prospect with a different eye: and endeavour to check a progress; which, producing, first independence; then rivalry; then superiority; they think, may be prejudicial to the mother-country. They, therefore, set up claims of controul, and dominion; which might serve their purpose, if they could prove the validity
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of them ; but will not ; at least, ought not ; when they are recently formed, to serve an ungenerous design ; and were never thought of, or mentioned, in the early, and weak state of the colonies.—Nothing can be more unjust ; nothing more injudicious ; unless the ridiculous measures be excepted, which have been taken to establish those claims, by asserting and withdrawing them, in an equivocal and undetermined manner.

I never could think it strange, that the colonies should refuse to give up the best fruits of their industry ; a tolerable, and improving system of government ; an increasing, lucrative trade ; and all productive of great degrees of security and happiness. They are now, probably, rousing and surveying their latent powers ; and, they are helped on towards independance and empire, by the very means which are designed to clog and to retard them.

COURTIER.

I fancy you only dream.—The army, my friend, is such a weight, as, I believe, they will hardly be able to throw off.

PHILOSOPHER.

Can you mention the army; and in that airy, ludicrous, manner?—You lead me, to a disagreeable subject; the plainest, and strongest proof of ill-design, and bad policy, in your friends.

COURTIER.

I suppose you will, now, get into the common cant, concerning standing armies; which has been, sufficiently, ridiculed; and every shadow of argument, it has brought, has been made to give way and vanish, by superior reason.

PHILOSOPHER.

I know not, what you may call common cant; and, as to what you call shadows of arguments; it is pretty; but I have only your opinion, and that not uninfluenced, to convince me of the truth of it.—Many arguments have been said, and thought to have been set aside, only because the opinions and measures they were directed against, were not made to give way. It must often happen so, in civil concerns of any importance. In
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these things, men ought to proceed with great care; and arguments against standing maxims, and customary measures, should be admitted with caution. This prudence, though always well intended, may be, sometimes, carried too far; and may defeat the best designs for the public good.—But, I am afraid, this had little to do in preventing the success of the best reasons against the augmentation of the army.

COURTIER.

The augmentation of the army could not be avoided. What a figure should we make in Europe, without an army?

PHILOSOPHER:

Better, perhaps, than we do with one; if we added strength to those powers of defence, and offence, which are more agreeable to our situation, and the spirit of our government.

But this is not to our present purpose.—My intention was to blame the method, lately pursued, of using the army, which is no part of our constitution, as if it was a
part

part of the executive power, to do the duty of constables and executioners, at the will of administration.

COURTIER.

It has, always, been customary, when the civil power has been insufficient, to call in the aid of the army: and I could mention many instances, at the establishment of the Hanover family, where, I am sure, you would allow their interposition was seasonable and beneficial.

PHILOSOPHER.

I can recollect the cases you refer to: and I can recollect cases, in which, almost, every bad institution, has appeared to have good effects, accidentally, or in some uncommon circumstances.—At the accession of the house of Hanover, the government was infirm, and in danger. In order to secure it from dissolution; to recover its stability; and to give it effect, it was, sometimes, thought expedient to have recourse to measures, which were unconstitutional; but were, perhaps, pardonable, because, in sudden emergencies,

no others could occur to human prudence. But what was an offence against the fundamental principles of the constitution; and was pardoned only for the apparent good design of it, cannot possibly be insisted on, as a precedent.

The civil government might, as well, have no existence, as not have a power to effect its own designs: and it will have no existence, but in form, when every civil officer is attended, by a file of musqueteers, in the execution of his office.—Suppose the affair in St. George's Fields, to be warranted by the constitution: and then, shew me the difference between our government, and that of France, or Turkey. Preserve, in such a constitution, the faintest idea of liberty; and I will, for ever, hold my tongue; and renounce all pretensions to knowledge.

And, in America; could the Grand Signior, have acted upon more despotic principles than we have done? The privileges of a province are called in question; the subject is under consideration, and de-

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bated;

bated; the legislature, of the mother-country, is, almost, equally divided on it; the independent, and best, part of its inhabitants favour the claims of the province;—nay, administration itself, in the laws it has procured to be made and unmade, has proceeded with that uncertainty, and inconsistency, which indicates political guilt, and a consciousness, that they are pursuing measures, which, indeed, may be agreeable to their system; but break in upon the principles, which are held sacred and constitutional by the people.

COURTIER.

You talk of a system:—Pray, how came you to be let into the knowledge of this system? Mr. B—ke's information, I suppose, you look upon as scripture.

PHILOSOPHER.

Indeed, I do not. It was my opinion, that the ministry acted according to a system, before I had read Mr. B—ke's ingenious pamphlet: and, to my knowledge, it was the opinion of hundreds besides: I could say,

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on very probable evidence, of thousands. Mr. B—ke's allegations, are supported in a masterly manner; he has brought to light many reasons, additional to those which were known, for a truth which the people firmly believed.

COURTIER.

I will allow, that some hasty and irregular measures have been taken; but I excuse them; as you said others have been, by expediency, and the view of public good. The people are become unruly, and riotous; and cannot be brought into order, but by the terror of some exemplary punishment.

PHILOSOPHER.

The people of England to be terrified into order!—Perish the people sooner!—To live in terror!—a Turk may bear it;—but, I hope, an Englishman, had rather, not live at all.—But, you have hinted at the real truth, in what you said last. The people are, daily, losing their respect for their governors: in plain terms, administration is hated; and to preserve itself in being, it

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has recourse to terror and fear; the ruling principles of despotism.

Every man sees, that administration is omnipotent; that it makes law, and executes it; that it invades, without ceremony, the constitutional rights of the people: and, can it be expected, that the people should not be unruly, or should obey, any longer, than while the sword is at their throats?

COURTIER.

You, perfectly, rant: Administration make the law; and invade the constitutional rights of the people!

PHILOSOPHER.

By whom is the law made, when administration has a majority in both houses of parliament; and, when to carry any measure, it has, only, to put it to the vote?—And, is not depriving a county of its right of election, destroying a fundamental principle of the constitution?

COURTIER.

That was done, by the H—— of C——; in the exercise of a power, which has, always, been supposed to be inherent in it.

PHILOSOPHER.

It was done by administration, by means of the H—— of C——; in the exercise of a power, which if, really, inherent in it, and, it was possible, in every case, to give it effect; would render us slaves of the lowest kind.

Administration, should be content to have the house at its devotion, in the common methods of business; and not lead it to assume powers, which must draw upon it the contempt, and indignation of an injured people.

COURTIER.

Has not the H—— of C—— often adjudged cases of the same kind with the Middlesex election?

PHILOSOPHER.

I believe not; in all its circumstances, and in the same manner. If it had; it would not have been the first unjustifiable thing, it had been guilty of.

The powers, and privileges of that house, are words undefined: They may have been left so, to prevent the invasion of them by the crown; not to reserve a licence to stretch

stretch them to the destruction of the community.—In the present, imperfect, state of human government, many powers lie undefined : when the public good calls for their exertion, they are acknowledged ; they are applauded ; and their acts are allowed to have authority : when they are employed to serve private, and mischievous purposes ; they are not acknowledged ; their authority is denied ; and their demands are disobeyed.—Let the H—— of C—— proceed a few steps further, in the exercise of the power it has, lately, claimed ; and, you will, clearly, see the truth of what I have said.—It is owing to the great imperfection of human governments, that there are any powers in them, which have, or have not, authority, according as they are employed.

COURTIER.

You are flown quite beyond my reach : and, now, you are in the clouds, it is the best time, to take leave of you.

WHIG.

No, no. He has, hitherto, done, only, what

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what many have done before him. He has pulled down with both hands. I should be glad to see him attempt at building up again. Or, in plain words, I should be glad to attend you, in your remarks on the opposition; and to learn your opinion, whether there may be some means to be employed to restore and establish our peace and happiness.

PHILOSOPHER.

I should have no objection, to give you my, private, opinion on these subjects, if it would not take up more time and thought, than I can, now, afford.

The original causes of our unhappiness, lie in our own principles and manners.— Those persons, of whom we complain, may have, wickedly, availed themselves of the occasions which we have given them, to oppress, and drive us to destruction. But, if we are destroyed, it will be, principally, owing to our own follies, and our own vices.

WHTG.

It has been a principle among us; and
you

you have, often, heard it mentioned, that, whenever our constitution is destroyed, it will be, by the parliament.

PHILOSOPHER.

The parliament can, never, destroy it, while the people have virtue to stand up for its preservation.

Every institution in the community, is in the power of that community: when any particular one, assumes a tyranny; it is, ever, in consequence of some faults and vices in the people. When the people are profligate; the order of things may be inverted; and the weaker may command the stronger. Parliament, therefore, can never ruin us, unless we are ready for ruin, to its hands.—But, I am tired; and you must release me.

WHIG.

We will meet again, as soon as possible.

PHILOSOPHER.

With all my heart.

COURTIER.

With all mine.

FINIS.

